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ABSTRACT

An inservice program for administratcrs that received high praise from San Diego (California) school administrators was a management style seminar using the "Personnel Profile System" and the "Activity Perception System" developed by John G. Geier. After briefly discussing a number of different systems that describe management styles, the author describes the Geier materials and summarizes the formal and informal responses to the workshops presented for administrators. (MLF)

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# THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SINGLE ADMINISTRATIVE IN-SERVICE ACTIVITY I KNOW ABOUT

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# THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SINGLE ADMINISTRATIVE IN-SERVICE ACTIVITY I KNOW ABOUT

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If the title of this presentation is not already sufficiently hedged ("single activity", "I know about") perhaps it should be further circumscribed. The reference really is to an administrative in-service activity done in the form of a workshop or similar presentation to a group of school administrators. It would probably be necessary to exempt other in-service/efforts which involve internships or on-the-job observation of successful programs.

With all the caveats out of the way, now is the time to tell you what this is all about. The activity I have found to be so well received is a management style, job description workshop using materials developed by Dr. John G. Geier, formerly of the University of Minnesota. The two publications involved are the Personal Profile System[1] which enables a participant to determine one's preferred management style, and the Activity Perception System[2] which describes the demands of a particular administrative position.

Through the years, a number of different systems have been developed which describe management styles. In the view of those who have used them, many appear to be successful. I hold no particular brief for Geier's work but after conducting more than 15 sessions, I have found his approach to be workable and helpful to the practicing administrator.

The work by Hemphill[3] and Stogdill and Coons[4] at Ohio State would rank high among the early efforts to establish a description of management styles. Perhaps the best known set of materials is that developed and refined by Blake and Morton[5] whose managerial grid with the "concern for people" and the "concern for production" axes have been found useful in many ways. Both of these systems suggest that there is a "best" managerial style; Blake and Morton believe that a maximum combination of the "people" and "production" characteristics is ideal.

Reddin[6] has an interesting approach to management styles as he has developed categories for the deserter, bureaucrat, related, missionary, developer, autocrat, benevolent autocrat, compromiser and executive manager. Ichak[7] has producers, administrators, entrepeneurs and integrators among effective managers and lone rangers, bureaucrats, arsonists, superfollowers, and deadwoods among the ineffective ones. The ideal then becomes the "textbook" manager, combining all the best traits. Hersey and Blanchard[8] see managers as emphasizing delegating, participating, selling or telling behaviors on task and relationship axes. Again, there is an implication in all of these descriptive systems that an "ideal" exists and that effective managers should develop such a style.

## DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS

In contrast to most of the other style descriptions mentioned, Geier does not attempt to describe an ideal. In fact one of the assumptions underlying his work is that there are a variety of effective styles and there is no attempt to indicate a preference, except as it may relate to the demands of a particular position.

The basis for Geier's program goes back to work done in the 1920's by William Marston in the book, The Emotions of Normal People.[9] Marston believed that human activity could be explained on the basis of those who prefer an active environment as contrasted to those who wish a less active one; and, on another axis, those who prefer a favorable climate as contrasted to those who are comfortable in a conflict situation.

Putting these aspects together on a four-part grid, Geier then proposes four management styles as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| D - DOMINANCE | Tends to take an active, assertive, direct approach to obtaining results. The "D" likes challenge, prestige, varied activities and freedom from direct supervision. |
| I - INFLUENCE | Tends to be active, seek change but to do so in a way that produces a favorable climate. Wants to involve people, keep them happy and may occasionally forget what the task at hand is supposed to be. |
| S - STEADINESS | Tends to prefer a more controlled, deliberate, predictable environment, values security of the situation, disciplined behavior. Is very loyal to any organization with whom they identify. |

C - COMPLIANCE — Tends to prefer that things are done the "right way", according to regulations or established standards. Is analytical, does not mind conflict when caused by insistence on standards, needs precision work.

In using the Personal Profile System, participants complete a brief reaction form, the results of which provide an indication of the preferred management style, along with a number of descriptions of their probable tendencies. Participants are asked to look at the descriptive terms and eliminate any which they feel are inappropriate. These descriptions usually prove to be amazingly accurate in the view of participants--over 90 percent of most groups believe that the characterization is apt. Discussions are then held in large and small groups about the implications of these descriptive terms.

The Activity Perception System does a similar task in describing the demands of a particular position. Participants are then able to compare their preferred management style with behaviors needed in a job which they either hold or would like to hold.

## RESULTS

I have been involved in a large number of workshops using the Geier materials over the past three years, both as a participant and a director. Most of these have been with management team members but some have included other classified and credentialed school district personnel. In each case, the general reaction has been highly favorable. In 1980, I worked full time in the San Diego City Schools where much of my responsibility was in directing a management team training program. Among the many, many activities that were presented for administrators, the management style workshops were the most highly rated. The ratings received led directly to a request to conduct additional workshops the following school year; seven of these were held involving approximately 150 participants. Evaluation results from these seven workshops were again highly favorable. For example, participants agreed unanimously that additional sessions should be scheduled the following year for those team members who were unable to take part.

In summarizing both formal and informal responses to the workshops, the following kinds of results were most frequently mentioned:

1. An increased self-knowledge.
2. A basis for career planning.
3. A way to work with an administrative team to maximize results.

4. An additional criterion for choosing new members of an administrative team--complementarity being seen as preferable to having all members with similar preferred styles.
5. A better understanding of others in all relationships, not just the job.
6. A "safe" vocabulary to be used in describing human behavior (since all styles are "good").

Without attempting a comparative evaluation of various methods of describing and determining management styles, I can recommend Geier's system as a management training element that at least in the judgment of participants provides solid values for the practicing administrator.

NOTES

[1]Geier, John G. Personal Profile System. Performax Systems International, Inc., USA, 1977.

[2]_____, The Activity Perception System. Performax Systems International, Inc., USA, 1979.

[3]Hemphill, J.K. Situational Factors in Leadership. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 1949.

[4]Stogdill, Ralph M., and A.E. Coons, eds. Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement. Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University, 1977.

[5]Blake, Robert R., and Jane S. Morton. The New Managerial Grid. Houston, Texas: Gulf Publishing Company, 1978.

[6]Reddin, William J. Managerial Effectiveness. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970.

[7]Ichak, Adizes. How to Solve the Mismanagement Crisis. Homewood, Illinois: Dow Jones-Irwin, 1979.

[8]Hersey, Paul, and Kenneth H. Blanchard. Situational Leadership Model. Center for Leadership Studies, 1977.

[9]Marston, William M. Emotions of Normal People. New York: Harcourt, Brace Co., 1928.